

# Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: F.

Date: July 27, 2005

**Topic:** First Review of a Request for Approval of an Alternative Accreditation Plan from the Greenville County Public Schools

**Presenter:** Mrs. Kathleen M. Smith, Director of the Office of School Improvement  
Dr. Phillip Worrell, Superintendent, Greenville County Public Schools

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**Origin:**

☐ Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

☒ Board review required by

☐ State or federal law or regulation

☒ Board of Education regulation

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Action requested at this meeting ☒ Action requested at future meeting: September 21, 2005  
(date)

**Previous Review/Action:**

☒ No previous board review/action

☐ Previous review/action  
date \_\_\_\_\_

action \_\_\_\_\_

**Background Information:**

The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* adopted by the Board in July 2000. Section 8 VAC 20-131.280.D. of the standards states:

Special purpose schools such as regional, special education, alternative, or career and technical schools that serve as the student's school of principal enrollment shall be evaluated on standards appropriate to the programs offered in the schools and approved by the Board prior to August 1 of the school year for which approval is requested. Any student graduating from a special purpose school with a Standard, Advanced Studies, or Modified Standard Diploma must meet the requirements prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-50.

Section 22.1-253.13:1.D.8 of the *Standards of Quality* requires local school boards to provide educational alternatives for students whose needs are not met in programs prescribed elsewhere in these standards. Such students shall be counted in average daily membership (ADM) in accordance with the regulations of the Board of Education. Regulations governing programs such as this are found in the accrediting standards, which permit alternative accreditation plans and allow the Board to grant waivers to certain provisions of the standards.

In September 2004, at the board's request, the department developed a template for school divisions to use in preparing alternative accreditation plan proposals. The department also developed criteria for the evaluation of proposals. This request has been reviewed against the evaluation criteria and a copy of the department's review is attached.

### **Summary of Major Elements:**

The school board of Greenville County is proposing an alternative accreditation plan for Zion Alternative Education School, an alternative school that serves students ages 11 through 15 who are at least two years below grade level in reading and/or mathematics or who have completed the fifth grade and have a record of severe discipline problems. Zion Alternative Education School has been rated "Accredited with Warning" for the past five years.

The purpose of Zion Alternative Education School is to prepare students in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades who are significantly behind in academic and behavioral fundamentals to successfully enter high school and earn a diploma. The program of instruction will:

- focus on reading, mathematics and writing, organization and study skills, and self-management for each student as specified in Individualized Student Success plans;
- use the Direct Instruction Corrective Reading program and Cortez Mathematics as instructional models for English and mathematics;
- build skills in history and science through interdisciplinary selections for reading and writing instruction and through the use of Reader's Workshop and Writer's Workshop;
- provide a student day of six to six and one-half hours;
- provide student support services that focus on self-management and adjustment skills as indicated in the eighth grade Health Standards of Learning (SOL);
- target a pupil to teacher ratio of 8:1 with a maximum of 10:1;
- provide career exploration;
- use data to improve instruction; and
- integrate technology into the classroom.

Greenville County Public Schools is requesting that the school be accredited on the following criterion: 70% of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in the program for a full academic year will pass the 8<sup>th</sup> grade SOL assessments in English, writing and mathematics and be promoted to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Students will be classified as ungraded for the first year to year and one-half. Students will take the SOL test in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade as available for the purpose of assessing progress, but the results will not count in the school's

accreditation rating. Students will not be classified as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader until he/she has achieved a reading level of 7<sup>th</sup> grade 4 months.

Greensville County Public Schools is requesting waivers to provisions of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* to allow them to implement the program of instruction as outlined above. Waivers are requested to provisions for instructional programs in middle schools as required in 8 VAC 20-131-90 B-D as follows:

- B. The middle school shall provide a minimum of eight courses to students in the eighth grade. Courses in English, mathematics, science, and history/social science shall be required. Four elective courses shall be available: level one of a foreign language, one in health and physical education, one in fine arts, and one in career and technical exploration.
- C. Level one of a foreign language shall be available to all eighth grade students. For any high school credit-bearing course taken in middle school, parents may request that grades be omitted from the student's transcript and the student not earn high school credit for the course in accordance with policies adopted by the local school board. Notice of this provision must be provided to parents with a deadline and format for making such a request. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to prevent a middle school from offering any other credit-bearing courses for graduation.
- D. To provide students a sufficient opportunity to learn, each student shall be provided 140 clock hours per year of instruction in each of the four disciplines of English, math, science, and history/social science. Sixth grade students may receive an alternative schedule of instruction provided each student receives at least 560 total clock hours of instruction in the four academic disciplines.

#### **Superintendent's Recommendation:**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education accept for first review the request for approval of an alternative accreditation plan from the Greensville County Public Schools.

#### **Impact on Resources:**

There is no impact on the resources of the Department of Education.

#### **Timetable for Further Review/Action:**

This item will be presented to the Board of Education for final review at its meeting on September 21, 2005.

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA**

**REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF AN ALTERNATIVE ACCREDITATION PLAN**

*Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, (8 VAC 20-131-10 et. seq.) set the minimum standards public schools must meet to be accredited by the Board of Education. Accreditation of public schools is required by the Standards of Quality (22.1-253.13:1 et. seq.). The annual accrediting cycle for public schools is July 1 through June 30. This cover sheet, with the supporting documentation, must be submitted to the Department of Education for review and recommendation to the Board at least 90 days prior to August 1 of the school year in which the plan is to be implemented.

8 VAC 20-131-280 of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* states (in part): *Special purpose schools such as regional, special education, alternative, or career and technical schools that serve as the student's school of principal enrollment shall be evaluated on standards appropriate to the programs offered in the school and approved by the Board prior to August 1 of the school year for which approval is requested. Any student graduating from a special purpose school with a Standard, Advanced Studies, or Modified Standard Diploma must meet the requirements prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-50.*

The Board of Education, in its *Guidelines Governing the Implementation of Certain Provisions of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, states:

*Schools described in this section are those that serve as a student's school of principal enrollment and where students are reported in fall membership for the school. Fall membership determines whether or not these schools are subject to the provisions of the accrediting standards; therefore, schools reporting fall membership are subject to the provisions of the standards. These schools may or may not administer Standards of Learning (SOL) tests.*

In accordance with the provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-330 of the standards, local school boards may seek waivers of provisions of the standards to address the unique needs of these special purpose schools. Such requests may include an alternative accreditation plan. Applications must be submitted to the Board for consideration at least ninety days prior to August 1 of the school year. Requests for consideration must be accompanied by information that documents the need for approval of the request.

*We, the undersigned, submit this request for review and approval by the Board of Education and understand that we are expected to appear before the Board to discuss the program and respond to questions raised.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
June 13, 2005  
Date Approved  
by the Local School Board

\_\_\_\_\_  
June 29, 2005  
Submission Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Genet H. H.*  
Signature  
Chairman of the School Board

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Robt. H. A.*  
Signature  
Division Superintendent

## ALTERNATIVE ACCREDITATION PLAN TEMPLATE

School Name	<u>Zion Alternative Education School</u>	Division	<u>Greensville County</u>
School Address	<u>1314 Lowground Road, Emporia VA 23847</u>		
Contact Person	<u>James Mason</u>	Phone	<u>434-634-4400</u>
Fax	<u>434-634-9854</u>	E-mail Address	<u>jmason@gcps1.com</u>
Proposed Duration of the Plan	<u>10 years</u>		
Grade Levels Served	<u>Six – eight</u>		
No. Students Enrolled by Grade Level	<u>Target of ten with a maximum of thirteen</u>		

NOTE: The space provided will expand to accommodate the description if the form is prepared in Word.

### ***I. Describe the mission and purpose of the school.***

Intent: To fully prepare each individual student in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades who is significantly behind in academic and behavioral fundamentals to successfully access high school content and earn a standard or advanced diploma (not just pass 8<sup>th</sup> grade SOL tests).

Vision/Mission: *Zion AES will be an educational environment where certain students who have not experienced academic success in a comprehensive elementary- or middle- school setting can develop the academic and personal skills and habits that will prepare them for success in high school.*

### ***II. Describe the Characteristics of the Student Population Served by the School. Include demographic information that identifies the subgroups attending the school, the criteria used to determine the students' placement in this school, and the policies governing parental involvement in determining the placement.***

Target Population: Greensville County students aged 11 through 15 who are at least two years below grade level in reading and/or mathematics for whom no other appropriate services have worked and who are unlikely to catch up in a regular school setting or who have completed a year in fifth grade and have a record of severe discipline problems. Initial

criteria for consideration in the program would include failure on the 5<sup>th</sup> grade SOL tests in reading, mathematics and writing. Time in the program would be two years maximum (three years for students placed at the end of fifth grade for disciplinary reasons); maximum capacity of the school/program will be 40 students. Parents of students being considered for placement at AES must be consulted for their input prior to making a recommendation. The names of selected students must be submitted to the superintendent for his screening and approval. Students recommended by the superintendent to attend AES will be presented to the School Board for approval. The superintendent may make temporary placements to AES for transfer students and students for disciplinary reason when the School Board does not meet for an extended time. A list of the prospective students should be sent to Zion at this time. The parents/guardians need to contact the Director for an appointment for a parent, student, and administrator conference. The home school should notify the parents/guardians of this requirement. At this initial meeting, a registration form will be completed along with various other forms, listing basic rules and procedures to be followed at Zion. Once the initial conference is completed, the student is eligible to attend Zion Alternative Education Center. No one is registered as a student of Zion Alternative Education Center until this initial conference with the parent and student has taken place.

***III. Describe the instructional program and support services offered by the school. Include a profile of the teaching staff and its qualifications, characteristics of the program that makes it a special purpose school, any differentiated instructional methodologies used, and transition plans for the students.***

Program of Instruction:

- The instructional focus will be reading, mathematics and writing, organization and study skills, and self-management for each student as specified in Individualized Student Success plans. The Direct Instruction Corrective Reading program will be used in reading classes and Cortez Math will be used in math. Both of these programs are individualized so that a student's initial performance level is identified and students are taught the skills they need to improve from their current level.
- Building skills in history and science will be accomplished through interdisciplinary selections for reading and writing instruction through the use of Reader's Workshop and Writer's Workshop.
- The student day will be six to six and one-half hours.
- The targeted PTR is 8:1 with a maximum PTR of 10:1 to better serve the students at this school.
- Student support services will include a focus on self-management and adjustment skills. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade Health Standards of Learning will serve as the foundation of curriculum and counseling in self-management.
- Physical education will be incorporated into the day through 50 minutes first period in the morning plus time recess time at lunch.
- Career exploration will be provided through the use of ACT's *Explore*, interest and aptitude inventories that each student will take and be counseled on the results, for the purpose of planning his or her high school course of study. Additionally, Career Days will continue to be held at the school periodically throughout the year.
- The school will exist to meet special needs of students who have not been successful in regular schools. By focusing on reading, writing and math, the school will be

better able to prepare students with the skills they need to earn a high school diploma. Staff will use time to cover content in science and social studies to improve reading comprehension skills of students.

#### **Profile of the teaching staff**

The school will be staffed with four fulltime teachers. Two teachers have full licensure, one in English with six years experience, and one in social studies with seven years experience. Two positions are currently being advertised. Both teachers have received training in How to Use Data to Improve Instruction and on Integrating Technology into the Classroom. The English teacher has received training in Corrective Reading, a Direct Instruction reading program and has attended the Beach Summer Institute – Working with At-risk Students. The social studies teacher is a teacher trainer for the CRISS program (Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies). CRISS is a program that teaches teachers to use instructional strategies that have been scientifically proven to be effective in helping students learn. Both teachers have experienced success working with at-risk students and helping them improve their performance. Teachers endorsed in content subjects will be trained in Corrective Reading, prior to the beginning of the school year, so that they can provide instruction to students at their appropriate reading level.

Progress & Exit Criteria: Students will be determined ready for 9<sup>th</sup> grade when they have acquired the academic knowledge and behavioral skills needed to pass the three 8<sup>th</sup> grade SOL assessments in English and mathematics. Progress indicators will include quarterly gains in reading, mathematics and writing and attendance.

#### **Transition Plan**

The high school staff will meet individually with students prior to their transition to review procedures and develop a schedule for each student. Students will meet every two weeks for the first semester with a guidance counselor who will monitor their progress *so that problems can be identified early*.

#### ***IV. Describe the strategies and instruments used by the school to evaluate student progress toward established goals and objectives.***

##### **Student Assessment/Evaluation:**

##### **Academic Achievement:**

- Each student will be diagnostically pre-tested prior to entry into the program in reading and in mathematics. Results will determine the individualized instruction each student subsequently receives.
- Students will be un-graded for the first year to year and one-half in the program; the students will take the SOL's at 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade in reading and mathematics when available for the purpose of assessing progress, but the results will not be counted for accreditation purposes for the school.
- When the student has achieved a reading level of 7<sup>th</sup> grade 4 months, the student will be classified as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader and subject to the end-of-the year SOL assessments in reading, mathematics and writing.

- Students will not participate in SOL testing in history or science because they will not have been provided the full SOL curriculum during their time in this school. Through curriculum integration, the students will continue to have exposure to history and science content in writing and reading instruction.
- Students will be tested at specific intervals throughout and at the end of the academic year (and at the end of summer session if included) to document academic progress and determine content for the next instructional period.

Study Skills/self-management/leadership: Teachers will monitor student use of specifically taught skills, such as note taking and organizational management, on an on-going basis. Behavioral indicators such as attendance and discipline will be the topic of quarterly individual meetings with each student.

***V. Does the school meet the pre-accreditation eligibility requirements outlined in 8 VAC 20-131-280.F. of the accrediting standards? (If not, waivers must be requested for each accreditation standard not being met.)***

Yes

*x*  
No

***VI. List each standard and provide a detailed explanation of why the standard is not appropriate for the school. (Note: Waivers of the assessment requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia are not available.)***

Waivers Requested: This innovation middle school will require waivers from the following state standards:

A minimum of eight courses in 8<sup>th</sup> grade;

Required middle school electives (foreign language, fine arts);

140 clock hours of instruction per year in history and science;

Accreditation based on reading, mathematics and writing only.

These students have received experiences and instruction in non-core areas such as the arts, music and health and physical education throughout elementary and middle school and will again when they return to a comprehensive high school. This school is designed to focus on significant interventions in the fundamentals to equip the students to succeed in high school when without such dramatic interventions they would not.

***VII. List the standards or student academic achievement criteria on which you propose to base the school's accreditation and provide a detailed rationale for selecting each. The standards/criteria must be objective, measurable, and related directly to the mission and purpose of the school. Provide data to support your rationale.***

Basis for Accreditation and Adequate Yearly Progress:

- 70% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who have participated in the program for a full academic year will pass the 8<sup>th</sup> grade SOL assessments in reading, writing and mathematics and be promoted to 9<sup>th</sup> grade.



- Students will participate in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade assessments when available for the purpose of assessing progress but results will not count toward the school's accreditation rating.

*For purposes of measuring Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act, the school will be measured on reading, mathematics and attendance.*

**VIII. Describe who was involved in the development of the proposed plan.**

Teachers, current and retired principals of the school, principals of the 5-6 grade elementary school and the 7-8 grade middle school, and central office administrators reviewed Perrymont's Alternative proposal to see if the plan would work with Greenville students. The principal of Wyatt spoke with the principal of Perrymont to ask questions about the curriculum and resources used by the school. Greenville's Director of English Education was familiar with the Reader's Workshop and Writer's Workshop program and highly recommended it. After reviewing all of this information, staff recommended to the Greenville County School Board that this plan be submitted to the Board of Education for approval.

**IX. Describe the method(s) to be used in evaluating the success of the plan.**

Benchmark data will be collected during the school year to measure student progress in math and English. Cortez Math and Corrective Reading provide data on how students are progressing so that remediation can be provided as needed.

Two methods will be used for evaluating the success of this plan. The most immediate will be the success this school has in meeting accreditation with 2005-2006 testing data. In the past, the school has not been successful because it has attempted to make-up what students have missed in all areas in a short timeframe. With this proposal, the teaching staff will be better able to focus on the most important skills students are missing. Students will be allowed to progress at a pace that will allow them develop the necessary skills to be successful in high school.

The second method for evaluating the success of this plan will be the percentage of students who receive a diploma. This will be a long-term measurement that cannot be measured until students in the new program reach the age for graduation.

**Virginia Department of Education  
Evaluation Criteria  
Zion Alternative School, Greenville County Public Schools  
Alternative Accreditation Plans for Special Purpose Schools  
(8 VAC 20-131-330)**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Limited</b>
<b>School characteristics and instructional program:</b>			
1. The mission, purpose, and target population of the school justify its categorization as a "special purpose" school and, therefore, eligible to request an alternative accreditation plan.	<b>X</b>		
2. The characteristics and special needs of the student population are clearly defined, and the criteria for student placement require parental consultation and agreement.	<b>X</b>		
3. The program of instruction provides all students with opportunities to study a comprehensive curriculum that is customized to support the mission of the school and the student population's success in achieving the Standards of Learning.	<b>X</b>		
4. The school provides transition planning to help students be successful when they return to a regular school setting.	<b>X</b>		
5. Strategies used to evaluate student progress are aligned to the mission/purpose of the school and include standards-based academic achievement measures.	<b>X</b>		
6. Convincing evidence has been provided that students who are enrolled in the school have not been successful in other schools subject to all the accrediting standards.	<b>X</b>		
7. Students will be taught by highly qualified teachers who meet the Board of Education's licensure requirements for instructional personnel.			<b>X</b>
<b>Alternative Accreditation Accountability Criteria:</b>			
1. Rationale and documentation provide convincing evidence that the "special purpose" nature of the school precludes its being able to reach and maintain full accreditation status as defined in the <i>Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia</i> (SOA).	<b>X</b>		
2. Alternative accreditation criteria described in the plan include academic achievement measures that are objective, measurable, and directly related to the mission and purpose of the school.	<b>X</b>		
3. The plan includes use of statewide assessment student	<b>X</b>		

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Limited</b>
achievement results of English and mathematics.			
4. The plan meets the testing requirements of the SOA.			<b>X</b>
5. The plan meets the testing requirements of NCLB and describes how the school plans to meet “adequate yearly progress” requirements of the federal law.	<b>X</b>		
6. The plan provides convincing evidence that all pre-accreditation eligibility criteria are met for standards in which waivers have not been requested.	<b>X</b>		
7. Waivers have been requested for accrediting standards that are not being met, and the rationale for the waivers are clear and appropriate for the mission/purpose of the school.	<b>X</b>		